UNCLE BILL'S LETTERS TO HIS NIECE

by

RAY BROWN

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No 1.

TO those two dear people (and I must insist they ARE people), M. A. and G. F. B., this little book is dedicated with the fondest regards.

To the first I owe the amiable impulse which started me off on these rambles.

To the second I wish to acknowledge my sense of obligation for the unswerving conscientiousness with which she brought me up.

The Author

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"Margaret Dear"

Uncle Bill's Letters
To His Niece

Chapter I

In which Uncle Bill gives some inside facts about Moonlight

My dear
little niece:

It pained me to observe that your last letter was decidedly in a minor key. You had intended, I gather, to go on a moonlight hike, the other boys and girls were ready and waiting, and the moon was better than good. Then, just at the last moment, mother took it into her head to say, "No."

Subsequently you spent a dolorous evening at home, and, relations between yourself and mother being strained, you

decided to fly for aid and comfort to me.

I am fully aware that angels, with their proverbial caution, would hesitate to tread here, between a daughter of your high-strungness, and a mother with the capacity for firmness frequently evinced by yours. But I always was a foolhardy person, so, in spite of all misgivings, I'm going to harness up the Red Cross wagon, load it with lint for your bruised spirits, and balm for your aching heart, and come clattering on my way to your assistance. You're quite right; you need both a confidant and an able-bodied sympathizer, and I'm flattered plum pink that you selected me.

It seems a shame—in fact, I am moved to strong language—it seems an unqualified shame, that when the others had wandered gaily out into the moonlight, you should be treed at home with nothing on your mind but your hair, and no more

exciting occupation than writing to an obsolete but affectionate uncle.

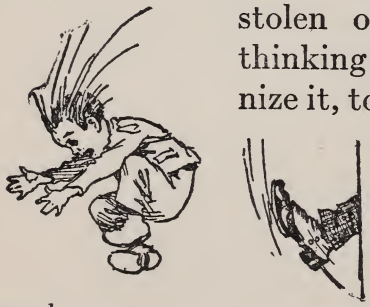
Aren't grown-ups the limit? I lose patience with them myself, sometimes. Don't they show a remarkable fertility of invention in the number of things they're able to think up that one can't possibly do? It makes one respect the marvelous powers of the human mind.

You did quite right to come to me. I'm a rebel myself. I've had the same feelings a great many times, and (if you'll whisper and won't tell a soul I told you) I'm beginning to be afraid that I'm incurable.

I don't know if I ever mentioned it to you, but I got expelled from school when I was about your age. There's no use going into details, but it was practically because I said, "Yes" when I should have said, "No;" I was in a hurry and there wasn't much time to think it over. It

wasn't vastly important, and it didn't do a great deal of harm at the time; very likely it improved the school some.

The only reason that I bring it up now is this: that every now and then, as the years go by, I am brought face to face with some quick, snap-shot decision, and when I look it square in the eye, I usually recognize that it's the same old question that has gone and painted itself up, and put on false whiskers or some other preposterous disguise, and stolen out surreptitiously, thinking that I wouldn't recognize it, to propound itself to me again. And you bet your life I say, "No." I don't want any more truck with it.



Improved the school

If you're willing to let this confession form a basis of mutual understanding, let's sit down

confidentially and investigate the cause of your perturbation.

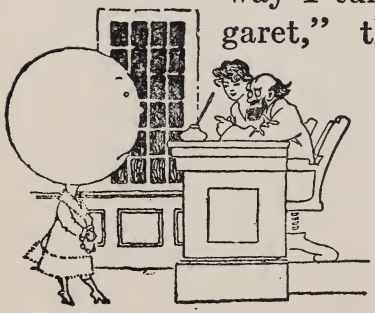
It began, I believe, in the special quality of moonlight in which you were invited to participate by your loving friends, but from which, for family and totally unreasonable reasons, you were violently debarred. Your difficulty seems to date back to the moon. At any rate, we are safe to begin there. Because if there hadn't been any moon there wouldn't have been any moonlight—and hence no excursion proposed; and hence, probably, a lot of other things. In fact, it would be difficult to figure out what would occur if there wasn't any moon.

Let's waive that as a side-issue, and proceed to indict the moon as the real culprit in this affair, and let's, you and I, conduct an impartial investigation with the idea in mind that somewhere along the line we may run across the reason

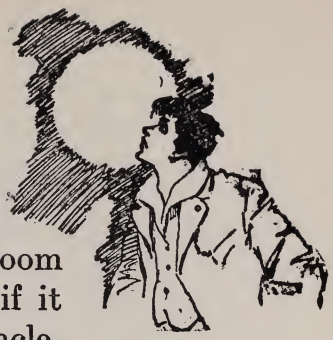
mother cherished for being so gun-shy about the moon.

There's no reason why we shouldn't be cozily informal about it, the moon is a somewhat intimate subject to discuss with a lady of eighteen. Still, knowing me as you do, you won't misunderstand anything I say, will you, Margaret *dear*?

Let's just pretend that you and I are sitting out on the front steps, and a perfectly good moon is blandly gleaming across the ocean, and just touching the perfect profile of your cheek. (At this point, if you will go back some five lines and reread, I'd have you note the classy way I turned the line on "Margaret," thereby surreptitiously introducing a tender touch, without being in any way liable for damages.)



Let's indict the moon



That, my dear child, was due to the effect of the moonlight on the peachy bloom of your complexion. And if it would affect me, your old uncle, that way, to what flights of fancy do you suppose it would prompt some slim and elegant young gentleman, with a décolleté sport collar, and a special talent for looking noble in the moonlight? (You don't have to answer—this is no oral examination.) Just make your own deductions and save them for future reference.

A talent for looking noble

Abandoning that line of inquiry for the moment—here we are, you and I, snugly settled down for a chat. I believe I am holding your hand. I think I became possessed of it some moments ago, while your attention was temporarily elsewhere. I could hardly say now how I did get it; certainly I was a perfect

gentleman about it, and there's nothing you need blush or bridle over. My impression is now that I asked you about a certain ring you either were or were not wearing—it doesn't in the least matter which—but my inquiry was of so absorbing a nature, and implied such an overwhelming interest in your welfare, that it completely diverted your attention, and you quite forgot I hadn't given you back your hand.

At any rate, here we are, and in about four minutes more, it is my settled conviction, that I shall lean my head on your shoulder, or put it down in your lap (confident that the moon will by that time have made such action on my part seem perfectly reasonable to you).

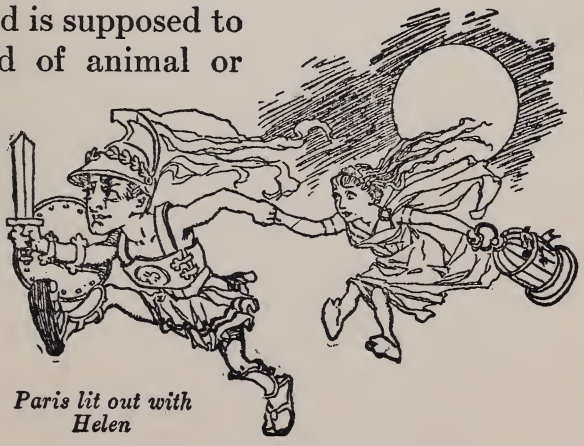
I am using a great many capital "I's" in this prospectus; perhaps I should use the editorial "we"—I speak for my sex.

We are a loyal bunch—us males—and

we understand each other perfectly. I am speaking in entire confidence that, even if I'm not on the job myself, some ardent co-worker will have taken up the task with enthusiasm.

Therefore, having arranged ourselves to my complete satisfaction—and as you have as yet said nothing, I am assuming that the understanding is mutual and complete—we take up the matter of the moon, its advantages and disadvantages as considered from the standpoint of the "Young Person."

Astronomically speaking, the moon is 238,850 miles from the earth. It has little or no atmosphere, and is supposed to be devoid of animal or vegetable life.



Paris lit out with Helen

One side of the moon never sees the light of day. And yet, in spite of all these seeming handicaps, the moon, my dear niece, is quite capable of raising merry Hades with otherwise staid and responsible men and maids.

And she has been doing that same for about a quarter of every calendar month, since Helen lit out with Paris, thereby completely breaking up the best society of Troy, and leaving Menelaus with a ten years' scrap on his hands. At varying intervals she has indiscreetly interfered in the affairs of the younger representatives of multitudes of our first families.

Take a little time off, to pick out the right one.

There's no use going into sickening details, but there were Héloise and Abélard for two; and when you remember

what the moon did to Juliet and her devoted Romeo, it makes you wonder how she ever dares to look you in the face.

There was a sad case, if you like. I haven't read the play for years, but as I remember, they only took treatment for about three evenings, and then it was daggers, poison and small swords! And nothing left of the prescription but a tomb for two!

There wasn't anybody in this party you *didn't* go to named *Romeo*, was there? Perhaps mother——

BUT, to come back to the moon. While it's admitted that she's been acting in a perfectly scandalous manner for eons of time, there's this cheering thought to comfort us on our lonely way. We have every reason to believe that the moon is going to keep right on in the same deplorable line of conduct all during your lifetime and mine. So why

repine? What if you have overlooked a bet or two in the past? There's plenty of chance in the future, dear child, and at eighteen there's plenty of future. So don't rush to the conculsion that mother has wrought an irreparable injury in your young life.

ONLY, instead of plunging abruptly into the moonlight with the first bunch of bipeds that straggle past your roost, take a little daylight time off to pick out the right one to sit up with. Otherwise you stand a chance of waking up some day to discover that you have married a noodle merely because he lit up well; and it may further disturb you to find out, in addition, that he gets fuller than the moon, and oftener.

It fills me with contrition to thus sell out my sex, but believe me, child, I know. It is a matter on which "woman's intuition" cannot be materially depended to

A noodle who lit up well

inform her. And it's discoveries of this sort, made too late in life, which have a tendency to make much of our married life a failure, and to fill some of our most improving literature with laments over the laxness of our divorce laws.

You must admit, yourself, that it's disconcerting to any lady, no matter how romantic, to face every morning over the coffee-cups, a party picked hastily by moonlight, with the realization steadily settling over her that she was actually in love all the time with the moon. I think this must be what is meant when people use the term "misplaced affection."

At any rate, my dear niece, I adjure you to pick your lad carefully and test him scientifically, paying due attention to his works, without too much regard

for his surface finish. As you grow older, and acquire a more permanent knowledge of the rules of the road, you will learn that many a "refined" looking car is merely "dipped," not painted; and of course, under those circumstances, it doesn't wear so well. If you have given yourself sufficient time to form your determination, selected your quarry with care, run him down and got him "cinched,"—then it becomes purely your own affair whether you prefer him plus moonlight, or minus.

I don't suppose that what I have written you here is exactly what mother had in mind when she told you at the last minute you couldn't go off with the other boys and girls for a moonlight hike. Mother is not as garrulous as I am, and even if she had consented to give her reasons, would doubtless have phrased them in more scholarly language. Mother

undoubtedly feels a sense of responsibility for her nearly grown-up little daughter, that compels her to choose her words carefully in discussing matters of grave import.

Being merely your uncle, I am naturally not so chary of my chatter. To me you are nothing but an interesting and ofttimes impudent young animal of the opposite sex, although I *am* desperately fond of you. Knowing that you have always been willing to make due allowances for this, I've always said to you frankly whatever happened to be on my idle mind.

In this matter of moonlight, I am as serious as a Presbyterian synod, and as friendly as a wet dog. If the sincerity of my feelings is not at once apparent, it's my fault, and I apologize.

I started out, fully intending to sympathize with you, and conscious even of a

slight impulse to aid you in browbeating your oppressors; but I have talked myself into rather a confused state of mind. I find myself wondering more and more about mother. Do you suppose, by any possibility, that your parent was right?

Devotedly,

YOUR UNCLE

CHAPTER II

Touching on Athletics

MY DEAR MARGARET:

Your last letter was a long way back, and I didn't answer it, did I? So you didn't write any more, and our fine young correspondence, that was going to be such a grand affair, blew up with a loud report.

You ought not to treat me that way, child; you're acting as if I were a regular correspondent. I ain't; I'm an uncle,

You ought not to keep books.

and entitled to a lot of special privileges. The mere fact that I don't answer all your letters as fast as you send them ought to cut no ice with an energetic young person like yourself. You should realize that your letters constitute a distinct refining influence in my life, and your sense of duty should make you conscientious about your work.

And above all, you ought not to keep books on me, and reduce the whole thing to the mere terms of a give-and-take proposition, a vulgar swap. That's no kind of way to act with an uncle that thinks as much of you as this one does.

You may, perhaps, dimly remember that you and I had a long talk about athletics before you started away to school. I presume I'm safe in taking it for granted that you did not listen at the

time, and that, even if you had, by now you would have forgotten every word I said; therefore, I'm going to recapitulate. (Fine word, that; sounds something like a sort of secondary surrender.)

But that's not the way I'm using it.

Not a bit. You may have beaten me so far up-to-date, but, like John Paul Jones, "I have not yet begun to fight."

I told you frankly that I did not care a "hoot" how you stood in your studies as long as you graduated from college. And I remember at the time, you seemed to find that an incendiary remark. I don't believe that any university has, as yet, mastered the full job of completely preparing youth for life. If you graduate, and the faculty are not distinctly sore at you, and are willing to entrust you with a piece of parchment, stating in ingeniously filled-in Latin phrasing that you have been an associate of theirs for a given

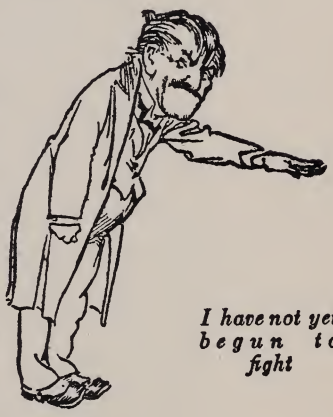
length of time without opprobrium, I am not sure that that isn't about all that anybody can get out of a college. You don't carry half the things away from school that the faculty entrust to your keeping.

I was, personally, a high line on integral and differential calculus. Even my professors marveled at my proficiency. I used, indeed, to marvel at it myself. I haven't thought of either of those diverting exercises since I said good-by to the faculty, and right at this minute on the clock I don't know what either of the terms means. I have a dim recollection that the cosine was a troublesome character which ought to have been left in jail, but beyond that my mind's a blank.

And yet a hard-working, underpaid man, with a high order of mentality, spent a couple of years banging a perfect comprehension of the details through my

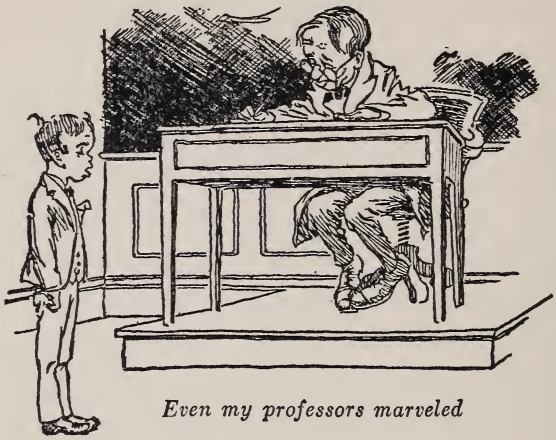
skull, and at the time we conversed on the subject almost as equals.

What I want you to get out of your four years of college is a sure-enough diploma, with no disability directly attached to it. Don't get a diploma that's held up on you for a year, and don't get suspended for getting unduly gay at unseasonable times. Get an honest, cheap, hard-working diploma, that states that you were there for the full four years, and that nobody on the faculty has anything against you.



I have not yet begun to fight

But go at once—mind you, you promised me four months ago to go at once! —and I knew perfectly well from the smug innocence of your last letter, that like the young man in the Bible, you said, "I go, sir," and went not.



Even my professors marveled

Now it is imperative. *Go at once* to the physical instructor, introduce yourself, get a physical examination, find out what is the matter with you, and proceed for three years and eight months to repair those defects.

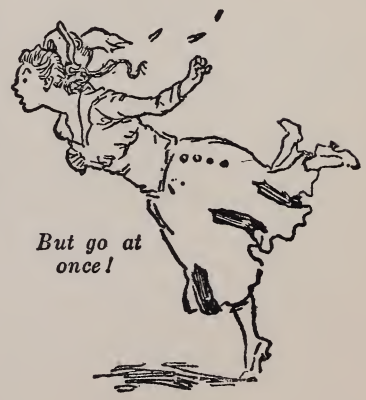
And this doesn't mean that I desire you to be captain of the basket-ball team, or win any cups at tennis, or give fancy exhibitions at pole-vaulting or standing

on your head; nor does it mean that you must be a muscle-dancer.

What I want you to be four years from the day you entered that school is a young woman with perfect, radiant health, who knows how to take care of her own body without drugs, and who's laid in a stock of ammunition in the way of health that would be good for ten years without any further additions, but who's got the habit of making regular daily replenishments so firmly fixed in her system that she'll carry it to her grave.

I want every muscle in its place, of the proper size, and doing its perfect human function.

It makes no difference what you contemplate d o i n g after leaving school. Broadly speaking, t h e r e are four



But go at once!

avenues of endeavor. You may marry, you may go to work for somebody, you may employ others, or you may loaf.

Nothing on earth can start a woman better toward happy wifehood than health and the knowledge of how to keep well. Nothing is a better asset for the employer than the even-tempered equability that comes of perfect strength and health. Nothing will advance an employee faster than the good-humor and capacity for work that derives from perfect health. And if you are going to loaf your life away, the Lord knows you'll have a better time if you're well.

I'm making this just as reasonable as I know how. I don't want you to accuse me of being an old fuss-budget, and I don't in the least want at any time to prevent your trying your own experiments with life. Every man has a right to his own gamble, and so has every girl.

There would be scant fun living if you couldn't take a chance for yourself sometimes.

But one thing that I don't want you to do is to come back at me with a line of reasonable excuses that you think you're going to get away with. Don't tell me that you're playing so much tennis that you really haven't much time left, and in addition to the tennis you are taking frequent sea baths.

I know all about that tennis, and I know that today is apt to be too hot, and that you can't play tomorrow because it rains, and that the day after it will be too cold; but a little superficial smartness at the game will lead you to nurse the illusion that you're one of the hardest worked tennis players of your acquaintance.

And don't

The hardest worked tennis player

That isn't the kind of muscle I mean

give me any of the sea-bath stuff! It's fine to take all the baths you can get away with, but don't brag about it. No person has a right to be inordinately vain about bathing, and nobody has a right to make it an excuse for not doing something else. It's a simple Christian duty, like saying your prayers.

I imagine all these warnings are unnecessary. I think you are much too astute a child to attempt to bedevil me with the obvious. What I suspect you are going to do is to write me a long, appealing epistle, full of filial devotion, in which I will find tucked away a hint or two that expenses have been heavy; that it would seem to be straining generosity to mention the vast amount of expensive apparatus necessary; that you are perfectly willing to do it, if I insist.

I can see it gradually getting itself together and making a fine letter. I almost believe it myself, now I think of it. I fancy I would believe it if it weren't for one thing.

I was a judge a few years ago for an athletic contest of young males. A prize was offered to the boy who built up the best trained muscles within a given time. It resembled a mail-order affair, and judgment was rendered on a series of photographs. One boy stood so far ahead that the judges became curious to know what special apparatus had wrought this miracle. They got the boy to come into the office and explain. When it was put up to him he said, "I used me mudder's flat-irons."

When I went to school as a kid, that boy would never have been allowed to get by with any such stuff as that. As soon as he mentioned the flat-irons the judges

would have seen at a glance that he was no athlete.

The fashion of that day prescribed that if one desired to be well and strong, the first inevitable step was to go to a specified place, and there purchase a certain kind of sweater, and a particular type of shoes, together with various other expensive and ornamental addenda supposed to be particularly imbued with health-giving qualities.

Now, when one of the physical culture maestros lays out a curriculum for the benefit of the multi-millionaire, he very seldom prescribes a costume. Sometimes he gently refers to clothes in an absent-minded, off-hand way. "You may do this," says he, "if you choose, in your pajamas, or you may do it in——"

Perhaps he goes no further into the intricacies of your wardrobe, but you gather the impression that, so far as he is

concerned, you may do it in anything you please that you don't mind getting down on the floor with, and straining at the seams. All that he is concerned in is that the thing be done. What is over or under your muscles while you do it is of less concern to him than it is to you—particularly if it is a hardwood floor.

The grace of a hippo

He doesn't bother with paraphernalia. Being an eminent business gentleman, he charges for the brains he puts into the undertaking, and the cost of advertising. After the money has been painlessly extracted, the proficient one usually contents himself with showing you photographs indicating how you would look uncomfortably draped in various impossible attitudes

over a kitchen chair. An ambitious anemic is apt to be surprised at the discovery of how much one can sprain one's back without incurring a dollar's worth of expense.

A 220-pound policeman whom I was once privileged to call my friend, said that walking was the finest exercise in the world for a human being. He didn't mean going shopping, or stepping over to a neighbor's, or strolling with a young man. He meant walking for the sake of the health it gave you, leaning the body until its weight helped to carry you forward, and making the arms and shoulders do their fair share of work.

I'll buy you a gymnasium full of the highest-price apparatus that the sporting-goods people can deliver if you think you need it and if it's the only inducement that will start you to work. But don't try to prove anything by it to me.

I want you to chum with the physical instructor, who, I'll bet right now, is a corking soul and a better comrade, if you get to know her, than any other member of the faculty. Get to be fast friends with her as soon as you can. Try right off to have her look you over and comb you down. Let her frankly tell you that you stand round like a lobster and walk like a slouch, that you don't even know how to dance, that your spine is crooked, and your head isn't put on right, and that you use those dainty feet of yours with the grace of a hippopotamus. Don't go after flattery, get next to the real things as she sees them, and then fix them to suit yourself and her.

Understand, dear, that this is your dodderingly affectionate uncle who is talking, and that I probably am plumb besotted in my admiration for you just as you stand; and I quite realize that this

may constitute an ambitious attempt to "paint the lily," but I have just got the confounded ambition to try to egg you on into becoming the best girl that ever stepped in her State.

And if you pile up, for four years on end, the surplus of health and high spirits I want you to gain, just as like as not you will find that, inadvertently, you are studying a heap harder than you ever intended to. You probably can't help it, but it won't hurt you any.

It's the old-fashioned idea of the "good student" that I'm trying to save you from; the kind that used to devote the summer following graduation to nervous prostration, alternated with erudite attempts to hand the higher criticism to mother.

I want you to be *real* girl when you come out. You don't have to be all bumpy and deformed, or look like an

overworked circus lady. That isn't the kind of muscle I mean. Good muscles are something like a Christian spirit, in that "By their work ye shall know them." In fact, it's vastly preferable that you should be the only person that knows that you've got them—unless the necessity arises to demonstrate. But you want to know right where they are, and just about what they'll do.

The possession of that kind of health and muscle makes anyone, man or woman, feel in all the contacts of life as if he were fighting down-hill, with the sun in the other fellow's eyes. It gives one a lovely sense of superiority.

Your next letter to me should be brief, abject, and conciliatory. The main news that I wish to gather from it is that the physical instructor, after a great deal of persuasion, has agreed to take your case in hand, although she has misgivings that

she'll not be able to make much out of you, and that the salient points that cropped out in your lengthy interview were that your biceps ain't mates, and that your feet don't track.

Affectionately,

YOUR UNCLE

So secretly safe

CHAPTER III

Uncle Bill Taboos Snobbery

MY DEAR NIECE:

Some days back there came trailing along a letter from you. I don't know where it is now—I haven't for the life of me been able to find it. It's a way I have with some of my most cherished possessions: I'm so afraid of being deprived of them that I put them away in a place so secretly safe that no one can find them, not even me!

I seem dimly to remember that in your

letter you used, with considerable glibness, what sounded to me like a cant phrase. It might be a bit of local slang, for all I know, but at any rate it seemed to convey a delicate innuendo against a certain very stout and honest little motor-car.

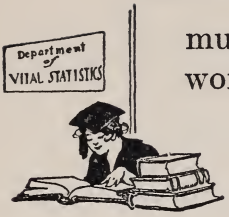
You wrote in friendly mood, as if you were sure of my perfect sympathy and understanding; you seemed to assume that the phrase expressed the common opinion of all normal, right-thinking people. I gathered the feeling that you and I both belonged to a vast crowd of successful, prosperous individuals with a special place of our own in society, who viewed this car whenever we happened to see it, from an angle of about forty-five degrees looking downward. There was to me about our position and our sentiments, as you translated them, a smear of self-sufficiency and a touch of

condescension which inclined me to revolt.

Frankly, my dear little girl, I'm against our attitude as you indicate it.

If you have got far enough along in that college course of yours to have struck the department of vital statistics, one statistic that might have stuck with profit is this: A few years back, the percentage of insanity was higher among women and girls who lived on outlying farms than among any other division of femininity. This was attributed to the hard, unlovely, monotonous life lived in lonely places, without sufficient variety of warm, human interest. During your summer vacations you have been in the country enough to know what a farm looks like, and you

With a special place in society



must have some knowledge of how the work is carried on. On the ordinary farm, work lasts from dawn till dark. There's usually one pair of work horses which cost a great deal of money. When the day is over these horses are so tired that it's bad business to work them any further, and the best-dispositioned farmer in the world is so sleepy at supper that he can hardly keep his chin off his chest.

If you're far enough along

If the farm lies a few miles out from the village, the mother and daughters stand an excellent chance of not seeing the village from early spring until snow flies. Father hasn't the requisite leisure at his command during the open season to drive the necessary miles. The horses haven't the excess strength, and even if they had, father wouldn't dare trust "Bub" with the valuable team.

So they all stay on the farm.

No visitors come, and they haven't much to think about, except the grueling hard work.

That's the old condition that used to promote so much insanity in the country.

But within a few years a new factor has made itself felt. The cheap little car came along, costing no more than a pair of good horses, sometimes not as much; costing practically nothing when you're not using it. When supper is over, no matter how tired father is, it is a relaxation for him to drive the car in the cool of the evening. He washes up with alacrity, shaves himself—and this one thing alone would be almost worth the price of the car to the womenfolk with lonely, affectionate souls; for father, shaved, has a kind, sympathetic, bronzed face, calculated to attract both admiration and af-

Can't keep his chin off his chest

fection; whereas, a Sunday-shaving father goes the rest of the week, lost in an impenetrable thicket of bristly stubble, from whose inaccessible depths it seems well-nigh impossible to disentangle him.

Also, father, shaved, inadvertently adopts a more gala set of manners. He gets into his best coat, cranks the little car, and in the long summer twilight away go the whole family merrily down the road to the village.

They are proud of father, proud of the shiny little car, and proud of themselves.

At the end of the road are the drug-store and the movies and the circulating library, old friends to see and new ones to make. It only takes a comparatively few minutes for the stout little car to whisk them over the six or seven miles, and after a jolly evening they can be back on the farm in plenty of time for abundant sleep.

It is a fine breather, and brings them in touch with lots of the good things of life that otherwise they would miss entirely.

So you see the little car comes mighty close to being a big benefactor the whole length and breadth of the land. You have got a fine warm heart, and a good clear head, and I dare you now to sneer at it.

Then there are the young folks, boys and girls just getting married, with not much money. They can't afford to keep horses, but they can squeeze out the price of a cheap stock car—always, of course, figuring that they want it worse than they want some other things. This means that the week-ends find them far out in the green meadows, along the river or under the trees, filling up with fresh air, instead of sweltering in town in dingy lodgings.

The little car means life and adventure and wonderland to them, and the babies, when they come, are going to be just that much better and stronger because of the little car. When you look at it from this angle, doesn't the little car begin to sound like a practical aid to civilization?

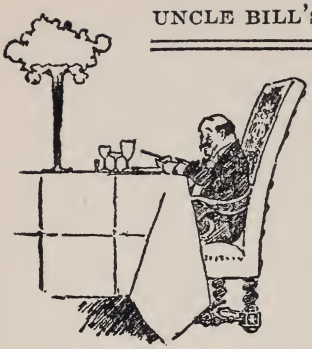
Dazzling complexions disguised by white veils

I don't wish to arrogate supernatural powers, and the Lord knows I'd make no money as a mind-reader, but I know something about how any human mind works at your age. So I feel free to assert that if you accepted an invitation from some nice young fellow of your acquaintance to go buggy-riding in his little tin flivver, and a great big fourteen-thousand-dollar imported car came honking arrogantly up behind you, after you had been crowded into the ditch to let it go by, you would feel probably smaller, and certainly cheaper, for

the incident. And no matter how upstanding and plucky a young fellow he was, his mood would be very apt to reflect yours. It's quite likely that there wouldn't be as much gay conversation between yourself and him for the next few minutes; it would be rather remarkable if you exchanged confidences on your mutual emotions.

You would doubtless have thought that those purple-faced, plump, successful-looking men in the fur coats, and the ladies with the dazzling complexions, disguised by white veils, were looking down with contemptuous amusement on you and your young man and your pitiful little imitation of luxury. If they all smiled as they went by, you misunderstood them. They were not smiling at what you thought they were.

They lit up involuntarily at the sight of you, simply because you were *you*, and



looked so nice, and because your young man was so devoted and proud, and because you were having such a perfectly charming time out in the open.

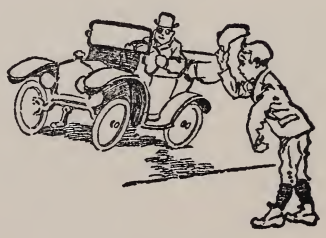
$25,000 a year merely for "three squares"

It's a hundred to one that they were all envying you. You know that those ultra-perfect complexions, that stack up so well under a white veil, are not always on the level, and very likely every lady in the tonneau was thinking that she would give her false hair to know what kind of toilet cream you used. And the chances are that the fat business gentlemen were figuring out just how much they would give to throw off a few years and a few pounds, and go back to the condition of living where it didn't cost a man twenty-five thousand dollars a year merely for "three squares and a place to sleep," and

where there was sometimes a chance of having as much innocent fun as that with a girl like you, and being perfectly sure in their own minds that the girl liked it as much as they did. This, instead of jolting along the road at fifty miles an hour, in a fever to get from the indigestion of the last road-house to the apoplexy of the next.

I'm not sure that the little car isn't a weaver of romance.

The reason that I have flown into such a passion of oratory over your probably thoughtless remark, is this: If the viewpoint it indicates happens to crystallize in your mind, and others akin to it begin to group about it, you, my dear, will be in the way of evoluting into a very successful little snob; and, personally, I don't aim to help bring you up



Train you to reverently raise your hat

into any such condition of servitude.

No, I revere the little car so much for the happiness that it has brought into lives which might have developed into hard angles, that if you were a boy I'd be inclined to train you to reverently raise your hat every time you passed a cheap car.

But, as you are a girl, wearing, as you do, no honest hat, but a fluff of confectionery firmly skewered to your thoughtless head, I will, instead, emit this threat:

Moderate as I am, and dispassionate as I have attempted to be in this dissertation—

If I ever hear of your treating the little stock car in the future with anything but respect, I'll take the flat side of a skillet and beat your bonnet off your benighted head!

A Sunday-shaving father

With love and fondest admiration,

YOUR DEVOTED UNCLE

You ask if men are streaky

CHAPTER IV

Takes a Fling at Heredity

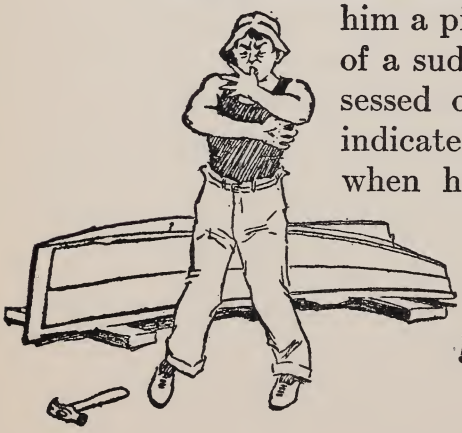
MARGARET DEAR:

You asked a question in your last letter which stands out from the body of the epistle like a rag on a sore thumb. You ask me if I don't think that *men* are streaky.

To answer you categorically, no, my dear child, I don't think that men are streaky. If you'll remodel your question, and ask me if I don't think the deportment of the entire human race is an uneven performance, I'll gladly

agree with you; but if you confine your stringencies to a single department, I'm out for an argument. Lest you should find something lacking or evasive about my direct answer, I'm perfectly willing to spend a few minutes in going into the merits of the case.

Let us assume, then, that your question was prompted by the, to you, unexpected behavior of some specially selected young gentleman. We'll say that you knew him well and favorably as one of the leading Christian Endeavorers of your neighborhood, and had been led to believe him a pillar of propriety. All of a sudden you become possessed of facts which would indicate that there were times when his behavior was far, far otherwise. You may have discovered him working



It's a case of another good man gone wrong

A pillar of propriety

on an old boat down on the beach, in overalls and undershirt, and cheering his loneliness with tobacco—which he appeared to be eating instead of smoking. Or, still darker thought, you may have come upon him unexpectedly, just after he had welted his thumb with a machinist's hammer, and caught him in the act of using language ill assorted for publication.

It may even have been drink, or the female of his species that led to his undoing.

To reduce it to the simplest terms, he did what you didn't expect him to do, and you, so to speak, caught him with the goods on.

Whatever it was, it's a case of another good man gone wrong. He is now definitely beyond the pale, and you turn naturally to moralizing and to me.

Now you are wondering, since so shining an example could go so far wrong, if there is any man, anywhere on the face of the footstool, that may be frankly trusted.

Will you let that go for a general hypothesis? If so, I'll agree to tackle the problem with you, and tell you frankly just what's in my mind, with no reservations.

I think that men and women alike are merely savages with a very thin veneer of civilization—children just a few steps away from the darkness from which we have come, groping with dazed eyes for a better light, and very often, with the best intentions in the world, stumbling and falling. I mean this to apply to your sex just as well as mine; I don't think you women are one bit better than we men are, or for that matter, worse either. You differ slightly in some directions, the

differentiation often charmingly in your favor. But as human animals, my feeling is that we all weigh in at about the same.

As, for instance, somebody said once that, "The lovely young thing who will swing on your neck at eighteen, and recite in impassioned periods that she'll die if you leave her, is quite apt to go on the stage just as your youngest children are getting out of high school." It hasn't happened to me yet, but I would be inclined to believe it.

Often charmingly in your favor

I'm not inveighing against her, you understand. That's just the way her streak asserted itself. She didn't care for tobacco; and profanity brought her no sense of elation. She was not trained to try to rob her fellow man, and she found

no solace in strong waters. So, judged by purely masculine standards, she looks as though her deportment were one hundred percent.; but, believe me, she's a savage child, even as you and I.

You know that back of us there are centuries of habit and training, even if you happen at this moment to be studying a text-book written by an eminent scientist who doesn't believe in heredity. The Children of Israel say there are six thousand years of history; Mr. Darwin surmises that perhaps six million would be a closer guess.

At any rate, since our first old savage ancestor rose up in his might, magnificent, and chose his hind legs as a means of locomotion, and beat domesticity into his wife with a club, what have they all

Beat domesticity into his wife

been doing? What habits have we, in this generation, gathered from them, even if we don't inherit by direct descent?

You've seen a dog turn three times on a short-napped rug in front of the fire? And you know that it's because his great-great-G-father was a wolf who slept in the open, amid tangled brush and matted grass, and used his own long fur and tail as a whisk-broom to brush himself out a neat bed, with a comfortable mattress to lie on. And so the dog, today, without apparent reason, goes through the same motions before lying down.

How many unconscious, or subconscious, wild habits do you suppose crop through our surface veneer, and seem to give our lives the lie?

Take the only authentic history of the race we've got. I'm referring to the Bible now, and I assume you'll stand by me. Kindly regard the first family

scheduled: four persons, Adam, Eve, Cain and Abel. One of them a murderer!

If the family traits are transmitted, that entitles you and me to have twenty-five per cent. of murder in our dispositions right at the jump. That's some considerable handicap to start *us* with, don't you think?

A high-line example

A few hundred years go by, and the Adamses get to acting so plumb unreasonable that the Good Lord can't stand for it, and He decides to extirpate them, saving only the pious Noah and his immediate kin, together with certain specified pairs of quadrupeds.

What happens?

The Noahs, under heavenly guidance, embark on a long sea voyage, and immediately on casting anchor, Mr. Noah lands and plants a vineyard and, as soon as he can arrive at satisfactory results,

proceeds to get most gorgeously inebriated, thereby setting a high-line example for all good sailors from his day to now to get "pie-eyed" the second they come ashore from anywhere.

Well, there were only eight in that family. So, in addition to the twenty-five per cent. strain of murder, we should get one-eighth of drunkenness. So here's three-eighths of your amiable disposition and mine accounted for before we get a guess as to how we would like to behave if the matter were left to us.

And, on top of that, you've always got to consider that it's a long way back to Noah, and figure some of the several folks who happened in between.

Do you remember calling my attention once in a gallery to the portrait of a Revolutionary forbear in

A Revolutionary forbear

regimentals, and how we conceded without debate that he had a brandy-and-water complexion and an ultra-calculating eye? He's sure recent enough so that he could quite readily have affected my destiny or yours in case you object to my tracing some of my streaks 'way back to Noah.

What might I inherit from that sterling old patriot? Certainly you'd expect a trace of the connoisseur when it came to high wines. The jowl and chin would hint of a streak in the family which at times would crop out in some form of high-handed oppression; and the size of his collar band suggested a strain of apoplexy and high blood-pressure. His disposition, I should say, was slightly choleric. Do you suppose he handed it on to me as a sacred trust?

Your blessed aunt has at times observed dispassionately that I have the

temper of a fiend, and the social disposition of an Apache; and she meant no harm by it at that, for I honestly think she's fond of me. That's merely some of my streakiness, because I do pose as a pleasant-tempered man.

One of her ancestors

On the other hand, I suspect your aunt is a coward, although she has a grand mind, and I'll admit frankly that she can lick me. That's one of her streaks. She was born to be a major-general, directing wars from a safe distance. She's not so good at what's called "in fighting," but fate has been unfair to her. One of *her* ancestors is said to have traded on the Spanish Main, under the sign of the skull and cross-bones, with eminent success. And there are times when I have my misgivings about that, too—

I think she's got some of his streaks.

I should say, to give you the best of which I'm capable, that in judging our sex there are a few important fundamentals to look for. If I were of your persuasion, and were personally looking the young gentlemen over, with perhaps some dim idea of acquiring a desirable specimen in case I found one, I'd put *truth* first.

I wouldn't care a rap what his *little* habits were, as long as he stood by his guns and defended them. I wouldn't care an awful lot what his manners were so long as he personally knew that they were bad, and showed occasional redeeming glimpses of a realization of better things.

And after truth, I think I'd put courage. Not the mere physical hardihood that perhaps even delights to take a chance, but the cool mental courage that

will take a man where he both loathes and fears to go, because of some dominating sense of right that is sufficiently compelling.

And third—though I don't think it by any means third in importance—I'd put a certain pleasing human chemistry, something that is beyond mere physical beauty or surface attractiveness; the quality by which certain people's hands are always the right temperature, if they should happen to touch you inadvertently; the quality that you rather like to lean against if you are very tired, and it's entirely proper that you should do so. Because nobody's any good that hasn't got these last qualities—that is, any good for you. The divorce courts are full of a crowded grist of people who married each other for their beautiful faces, and are now busy telling the judge what fiends in human form they got sawed off on them.

I heard a mighty bright woman say that most clever women married poor men because they could make them laugh. It's fine to laugh a reasonable amount of time; people who grow old with little laughing wrinkles round the corners of their eyes are nice people usually. But, on the other side of the equation, there are some good souls you can have more fun being sad with, than you can associating with the funniest comic supplement that was ever published.

There's one more quality that I want to append to my list of desirables. It may not even be the whole of a quality at all—perhaps it's nothing more than a tendency. But, personally, I like men, and women too, who are rather extra kind to those they don't have to be kind to—the little folk, the weak ones and the poor ones. And when you can find

The Vestal Virgins liked it.

They came and brought their lunch.

somebody who prefers to be kind, but who will go gaily out to war with the biggest proposition they ever saw, entirely oblivious to the size of their opponent, you have got somebody that has some nice qualities. Because it's a fine and rare trait in human nature to be devoid of both servility and tyranny.

Lots of people, after a short surface study of the human race, rise up joyously and write fat books proving that the said race makes no progress and is headed nowhere. I haven't got a lot of sympathy for such endeavors. To me the movement of a race must necessarily be so slow that nothing but the special facilities of a scientific observer

could possibly hope to record it.

You know what a glacier looks like—you've been among them, and you know it's only recently that anybody had any idea at all that glaciers marched. Here before the eye palpably is a vast, immovable mountain. Some of it melts a little in the sun on hot days; but you go back to it again and again during your whole lifetime, and it's always just as you first found it—that is, if you're the ordinary observer.

But the scientist goes and arranges a delicate little set of instruments for measuring, in which the microscope and micrometer screw play important parts. And he protects them against a change of weather, and leaves them there for a year. And when he comes back and reads the record, he says, "Yes, it moves; in a hundred and ten years it will be overboard. It's going down thirty

miles to the sea." And the man's right.

To adjust the micrometer screw and the microscope to the movement of the human race—

You know that two thousand years ago, in Rome, you could advertise the fact that you were going to butcher a hundred Christians in the arena of the Colosseum. Margaret dear, the world has come up so far that you, with your birth and training, in spite of all your courage, couldn't sit out that gruesome sight. But the Vestal Virgins could—they liked it—they came and brought their lunch.

That was only a short two thousand years ago, and today, if you catch me going to see a little discreet boxing between two perfectly healthy persons, who emerge therefrom without a scratch, you regard me as a low, beetle-browed bully, you disqualify me as a gentleman, and ask yourself despairingly, "What is the

world coming to?" The answer is: It isn't coming to anything—it's going away from it!

So, to come back to the scratch-line from which you started me: No, Margaret dear, indignantly I deny it. We men are not streaky, we're simply human, that's all.

Affectionately
YOUR UNCLE

CHAPTER V

Touches Up a Few Complexions

DEAR
LITTLE GIRL:

In your letter before the last—the one I didn't answer—you mentioned blithely in passing that you had just been trying on a senior's cap and gown; and although I wouldn't accuse you directly of pinning verbal bouquets upon yourself, I somehow was led to infer that you deemed the effect vastly becoming.

Far be it from me to undermine your character with adulation, but I am confident that in that rig

you would be something to look at.

But here, just as imagination has taken me by the hand and beckoned me to come a-Maying, my avuncular duty knocks on the door of my mind with three sullen thumps. "Remember," says the A. D. in a sinister voice, "you are not to go turning that child's head with blandishments about what an extremely easy looker she is liable to grow up to be. Be firm with her; pull out the vox humana stop as far as it will go, and 'Rollo' at her until she is reduced to tears."

Did the suspicion ever cross your thoughtless mind of how many ladies there are in this vale of tears who look extremely well in fixings to which they are in no way entitled? I am not inveighing against your sex as a whole, but simply indulging in passing comment on a small but none the less well-advertised minority whom I seem fated to pass in

my daily walks.

Complexions are what I have been noticing most of late—complexions such as never were on land or sea. I suppose it is none of my business—a lady should have a right to put anything she can legitimately acquire on her face, the face in question being her inherited and inalienable possession which no one can give or take away.

But when you walk past two solid miles of them on a populous street, or meet maybe three thousand of them on a sunny afternoon, and they have almost all done something to their faces which leaves you in grave doubt as to the inherent humanity of the faces with which they started, it has a tendency to fill a common human being, one who has been brought up to take his faces *au naturel*, with an abiding gloom.

From stray fragments of conversation, by chance overheard, I have gathered the vague idea that there are quite a large number of ladies who seem to be made up of goods that will not bear washing.

My facts may be foggy, but in some way I have gained the impression that soap and water does something to their faces—congests them, or coagulates them, or aggravates or upbraids them—something, anyway, that no lady of refinement would ever care to have done to her face.

Don't misunderstand me to the extent of inferring that personally I prefer goods guaranteed to be fast. I may be flying in the face of revealed religion, as expounded to me as a child, in even hinting of any such thing. Because I seem to recall nothing in the instruction imbibed in Sab-

Goods that will not bear washing

bath-school which referred in any way to soap as a cleansing agent; and there are certainly copious references to full-dress occasions where, if I have the phrase correctly, the participants, being all togged out fit to kill, topped their toilet with a liberal application of "oil to cause the face to shine."

It may be irreligious—it may even be unhygienic—but personally it doesn't sound right to me. I don't think I should have liked it if I had lived back in Old Testament days, and I don't seem any more drawn to it now, although I know that some of the things smell heavenly, and come in perfectly gorgeous cut-glass jugs. And most of them, I presume, are put up at a price distinctly suggesting gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Such oils and unguents in the hands of a properly qualified adult may be, and doubtless are, an excellent thing to assist

Nature when she falls down on her job; but to place them in the hands of the youthful and uninformed seems to me about as perspicacious as trying to amuse the baby with the ink or the acid bottle.

When you pass a little tad of grammar-school age, and she is calcimined to such a degree that you cannot tell whether she was originally covered with burlap or linoleum, and you mistrust from her general contour that she is something short of fifteen, it gives you a jolt. A procession of them, if you view the world through elderly and partially discriminating eyes, gives you an impulse to fall plump into the arms of the first unwhitewashed person you meet, and flatly, as the great dramatist said, "sit upon the ground and tell sad stories of the death of kings."

Of course, most of the poor little things don't mean any harm by it; inside they

Fall plump into the arms

are probably just as good as gold. But if that is so, why should they wish to advertise something entirely different? Why on earth should they desire to appear on the street with their faces just one gorgeous smear? Lip-stick, eyelash marker, rouge and concrete enamel slathered on, until one is confident that if a chunk of it should flake off, one would hear it bump on the sidewalk.

And what are their mothers thinking of to send them out looking like that? They, at least, are old enough to know better. Any lady old enough to be a mother of any kind has got a right to know this—that while a facemask made of paint may do something to conceal the ulterior designs of a lady uncertain about her moods and tenses, it never yet has been known to attract favorable comment to a nice girl.

After you have seen a few squads of these overdecorated feminines march by, you are seized with an overwhelming desire to fix them up just a little bit more. You are inclined to share the feelings of a care-worn but punctilious housekeeper, who owns a small white, woolly, pink-nosed dog, and discovers just before she is about to give a party that Fido, with his pink ribbon, has been nesting in the garbage-can again. It is enough to make any warm-hearted impulsive soul want to take these poor little paint-layers by the scruff of their necks, just as you would Fido, and hold their little white-enameled noses over a tub of tepid soap-suds, and scrub 'em, and scrub 'em, and scrub 'em, till they are too weak to cast a shadow.

It is the kiddies, who buy it by the quart, and use it for a disguise, who make

Too weak to cast a shadow

the stuff hateful. Any mature lady, whose soul cannot express itself without a delicate touch of maiden's bloom, should be entitled to honorable satisfaction. But on the indurated cheek of experience it has its hazards. Let the lady overstay her time by but a single year, and what she gets instead of admiration is derision, if not worse.

Not long ago I heard of an honest, kindly old captain of industry who came to town to borrow a few odd millions, and brought his equally honest and kindly old wife. She was habituated to a liberal use of oils, paints, varnishes, and so forth to protect the shrinking delicacy of her epidermis. She knew no better. Poor thing! She thought they made her pretty.

He left her at a hotel and went downtown to interview an unctuous and respectable old Shylock for the funds. His talk was eminently satisfactory.

Business rolled along on rubber tires. He was told to call next morning and sign up for the cash.

That afternoon he took his wife driving in an open carriage. Shylock saw the pair, and his soul was pained beyond measure that a reputable man, to whom he had nearly loaned three millions of dollars, should venture forth by daylight in company such as she was painted to look like.

The next A. M. he broke it to the captain. *No loan!* No, sir; not to any man so brazen as to travel the streets with women like that!

That's the verdict that excessive paint will always exact from all but the most charitable souls—"a woman like that." That's what these poor little immature fledglings, with their empty heads, are playing up for—to have a world of strangers, whom they think they are

fascinating, pass, and in passing callously characterize them as "women like that."

Of course, none of this is aimed at you. It is simply an abstract dissertation on the horrors attendant on life in a large city; the horrors in question having shown a tendency to become greatly accentuated along about Easter Sundays of the years 1915-16-17.

As far as you are concerned I have no misgivings. I am confident that if your face is not the right color as God made it, you are of sturdy enough fiber to go through life imperturbably, without wasting any time in an effort to match up any of your features with what the specialists say is the prevailing and fashionable shade. And my spirit is peaceful in the thought that it would be humanly impossible for you to do the amount of exercise and gymnastic work you are doing if you had to depend on a slush-

bucket for the necessary replenishments.

I suppose that men, in spite of their boasted claims, are at heart an illogical bunch, because even as I write I am conscious that there have been times when, personally, I honestly admired a made-up eye. Earlier in life I am not dead sure that there was not at least once when I adored one.

But, just as you may assume that there is not one man in a million who has the capacity to paint a good picture, so it is almost equally safe to assert that not one girl in a million is dowered by Heaven with a natural talent for making up; and most young women would be spared some shocking exhibits if they realized that every time they operated on their eye they were liable to impart an expression to it that few would dare to live with.

None of the foregoing diatribe, my dear niece, is to be taken as applying to

Once when I adored one

His swallow-tail hopelessly discolored

the harmless and necessary powder. Any lady, if she has been unduly agitated—bitten by a rattlesnake, or sunstruck—has, in case of last resort, the right to a reasonable amount of rice-powder.

But I leave it to you. You wouldn't like it yourself, now, would you, caked on the exposed surfaces of your most loved menfolks, where you might lavish a thoughtless kiss? So a due amount of conservatism lends an air of refinement even here. Many an ardent young man has got his first realization of the stern realities of life when he found on getting home that the satin facing of his swallow-tail was hopelessly discolored where the chalky arms of his inamorata had indelibly registered affection.

Where did all this vituperation begin? Something you hinted, I think about looking so surpassingly smooth in habili-

ments which did not belong to you.

Half the feminine trouble in this world starts with the innocent but soon-to-be-troubled one suddenly getting a picture of how particularly gorgeous she would look plus something to which she has no hereditary or honest title. Many of these aids to perfect appearance are kept, as I have delicately suggested, in druggists' jars. Others repose in the showcases of swagger jewelers, and some, I believe, are still running round in a state of nature, keeping their present owners, the skunks and the minks, warm and dry.

Femininely speaking, it is fine to have fluffy hair. I know ladies who pay three dollars on Monday to have something put on theirs, and one dollar on Tuesday to have it taken off again; alternating thus through their busy week, and facing on Saturday night a deficit of nine dollars for having it put on, and three dollars for

having it taken off. They say that nothing else produces the same effect—except having good hair. I have been hounded by a sneaking suspicion that what goes on is a well-known mange cure, and that what takes it off is a soap equally good for shaving or use in the laundry. But when you hear the ladies themselves mention it, it sounds like a ritual from some mystic shrine.

Dropping nonsense for the moment, and getting right down to the sub-cellar of facts, it is a heap better, little girl, to be something, and do something, than it is to look something. It is a finer thing to win a place in people's hearts and hold it, than it is to keep even an advanced position in the sidewalk throng, whose iridescent complexions cause the by-stander to gasp!

It is a happier thing for the girl's own self—and I won't even add the stock

phrase "in the long run." It is a happier thing right now, this minute, to have a merry and honest soul looking out of fearless eyes, than it is to view the world about you through the eyes of sad disillusionment, no matter if they be made up with something that costs much more than radium.

AND my best word to you—still going back to the cap and gown—is to endeavor not to allow your mind to be diverted too much by ornaments and side-arms and epaulets, which represent the different degrees of ability or pulchritude in this wicked world, but to study the things for which they stand.

And having made up your mind as to the worthwhileness of the thing itself, go after it, and God speed you. If then, after you have acquired the solid substance, you discover to your surprise that

its adornments and hereditaments become your style of beauty, hurrah for you!—you are a lucky girl.

Look at the back side of the tapestry for a moment. Go out in the park some day and watch the procession of elegant equipages, each with two men in uniform, and each bearing in haughty splendor on its back seat an overfed and bejeweled lady, and an over-fed and dyspeptic Pom. Art can do no more for either. They represent the last word in color and cut. But where are the hosts of admirers? If you leave out the two on the front seat, who are paid to be there, the answer continues somewhat aimlessly to be, "Where?"

Do not dwell overlong on this scene of desolate grandeur, but come back again to the girl or woman who has something of wholesome service to offer everyone she meets, and who, no matter whether she

started life looking like a magazine cover or not, is of a neatness, and cleanliness, and sweetness, that makes everybody's heart go out unconsciously to meet her half-way.

The girl who, instead of plastering coloring matter on the outside of her eyes, has been cultivating the soul and personality behind them; who gets her color from out-of-doors, and her grace from health and exercise; who puts the real stuff *inside* instead of false stuff outside—is young at any age. I wouldn't even bar Mrs. Methuselah if she was that kind of a person.

I think I had better stop while the stopping is good; otherwise I am liable to lie under the imputation of taking too much time from your really important studies.

To get back once more to the sordid practicalities of life, what kind of a senior

do you aim to be when you get that cap and gown? Just simply a becoming one, or one of those grave creatures full of hauteur and erudition? Or will you make a nice blend of all the qualities, and be becoming at times, and both wise and merry at all times?

I don't suppose I *could* like you any more than I do now, but when I contemplate the prospect, I am afraid that I am going to.

YOUR PLAIN UNCLE

Ladies who pay three dollars on Monday

Distracting Attention

CHAPTER VI

Uncle Bill Loses His "Goat"

MY DEAR
LITTLE WOMAN:

I managed to extract much joy out of your last letter. Particularly was I struck with your surmise that the cerise silk stockings might distract the attention of the observer from contemplating the brilliancy of your intellect.

Danger of that sort may lurk, but as the gown which your aunt conferred upon you is white and, as I remember, has a reserve touch of the self-same color, I think that if I were you I would risk a chance on having my intellect regarded temporarily with inadvertence.

I am rather pleased with myself for giving you this advice for I think that your query was made much in the mood

of a voter who canvasses before election to find out who is going to win before he votes, and is correspondingly gratified when he has guessed right after he has cast his vote.

I believe my advice in regard to the hosiery is inherently sound but I am strongly of the opinion that nothing will separate you from said cerise socks short of a sheriff's posse or a search warrant. I have no idea that you would consent to be parted from them without due process of law.

Mention of the casual voter and his fatuous desire to join the majority reminds me that I esteem it my avuncular duty to tarry by the wayside and be a trifle cross with you.

Your last letter contained one item which on mature reflection I find indigestible. I am referring to what you told me about the "nice new girls" you

had just made friends with. I don't recall whether you spoke of them as belonging to the "better classes" or whether you distinctly designated them as "swell," but I received both impressions.

It was a remark you quoted from one or more of them that stuck in my crop. Something to the effect that in her (or their) opinion "Our very nicest people didn't go in strong for Woman's Suffrage."

Your sub-deb may have been right according to her lights, but, even if so, it gets her nowhere. There have been times in national history when our self-elected "nicest people," in the face of a new movement, have shown a marked backwardness in coming forward, and quite a number of momentous events have been ushered in by people whose names did not occur in the blue book at all.

In fact, the spirit of genius not in-

frequently works that way. The old masters weren't "old masters" at all when they were young chaps rustling pot-boilers for their bread and butter. Generations after their death elapsed before the world really woke up to the importance of their work.

I seem to remember dimly seeing a statement somewhere that one of the Adamses practically queered the American Revolution with a large number of ultra respectable society folk of his time. I faintly recall that one of the Colonial 400 even went so far as to refer to him flippantly as a pothouse politician. But you've only got to be a nineteenth cousin of one of his most obscure progeny to pretty near qualify for being a Colonial Dame today.

And John Brown, who was not only instrumental in getting the first shot fired in our great war for freedom, and who

perished in a misguided attempt to "double in brass" and receipt for the same shot, was a person of no social standing whatever. And yet, it is needless to remind you, that today the social pets of John Brown's time are permanently planted under mausoleums heavy enough to hold them in everlasting peace while the turbulent soul of John Brown, as frequently stated, still goes marching on.

I can't seem to remember that I ever haggled with you very much about "votes for women." In fact, I believed you to be a person of such sense as to obviate the need. Besides I, personally, feel no burden of responsibility for Woman's Suffrage.

I didn't bring it here. There is no reason why it should mean anything particular in my young life. I have all the votes I need now and a perfectly good

wife who can out-vote me two to one under existing laws.

Why should I clamor to extend her powers?

And yet there was something the least bit snippy about your lady friend's remark, something that reminded one of the old high handshake that used to be so inordinately popular.

Your memory may not go back to it but I recall a number of social occasions on which, in the attempt to greet a polite stranger, I discovered to my chagrin that I appeared to be flapping one hand around in the sub-cellar while my vis-a-vis was waving da-da to me from the mansard roof.

I suppose it was unreasonable to take umbrage but I never failed to become secretly incensed, and I find myself enjoying the same mental disturbance over a visualization of your society friend

who, probably, is "going on 18" in her act of instructing you as to what our "best people" are doing. And the fact that she attached her easy lessons in etiquette to a human problem as weighty as Equal Suffrage impels me to orate at you after a somewhat acrimonious fashion.

You will therefore please pardon any indication that my bearings are getting hot and assume, as I feel sure you will, that if anything sounds at all ill-tempered it is meant for the lady who took it upon herself to mold your shy young character.

* * *

To begin at the very beginning of the somewhat ponderous problem which your young friend so blithely disposed of with a would-be axiom, a government is said to derive its just powers from the consent of the governed. To you, who are rapidly getting to be a highly educated and sophisticated lady, it is superfluous

to mention where and by whom this was said. From looking over your school schedules I feel justified in assuming that you are also getting to be somewhat of a logician. I therefore ask you—

Have you any objection which you wish to voice at this point to that sentiment? You have not? Very good!

Having thus skilfully lured your childish footsteps on to ground which an anti-suffragist would do well in self-preservation to avoid, I am moved to propound this query.

Are women a part of the governed? That is, do you acknowledge them to be subject to the laws under which they live?

In order not to make this sound too much like an examination, or to tax your intellect too far, I will frankly say that the answer to this question is

"Yes."

Especially if the sheriff is speedy

enough to catch them, and they do not happen to be too good-looking when it comes to facing the jury.

Our forefathers, as you doubtless recall, met in Philadelphia at the front end of the disturbance with the mother country and formulated a very good Constitution which became the basis of all our laws. So far as I can remember, women were not noticeably consulted. Of course a forefather or two may have gone home at night and asked his wife how he'd better vote the next day. But if so, the fact did not creep into history, I believe. If I am wrong in this, you, being nearer to history than I, may correct me.

Our forefathers spoke from time to time about "the people" and demanded quite an extensive bill of rights for them.

Would you care to start an argument at this time as to whether women are people or not?

I am willing to take the affirmative, if you wish the other end of the debate, in spite of the fact that in the Orient it is assumed that they are not, and as the Orient is a large place—perhaps one-half the population of the world today—might on a referendum decide that the women have no souls.

I am even liberal enough to admit, if pressed, that possibly the little friend who advised you on the subject of suffrage might have been born minus a soul. Or, if she has one, perhaps has not had time to get it in good working order as yet. But I think that if you use your brains instead of your superstitions and your prejudices you will be willing to admit that in almost everything, except perhaps voting, women show a marked resemblance to people. And as it was for "the people" that our forefathers ostensibly conducted their lucubrations

it sounds only fair that women should be entitled to a wee small voice.

Of course I recognize that at this juncture some weazened little feminine party is liable to arise in our midst and protest in an acidulated voice that "Women as a class don't want to vote."

My dear young relative, just so long as any *one* single woman *anywhere* is moved to voice a decorous and modest interest in the conditions of her own legal servitude, political, economic or domestic, it is up to old Father Earth to stop work instanter, roll down his shirt-sleeves, put on his best bib and tucker and bend a reverent ear to what the lady has to say.

Because a vote is, after all, nothing but an opinion. You make a cross on a piece of paper, merely indicating that you think thus and so. It's not an arduous task. Usually it doesn't take long. Although there have been times when the ballots

were so big that one could not unfold them in the legal sized voting booth.

But that is no reflection on your sex, Heaven knows! but is due solely to the fact that some misguided and superior male in his attempt to concentrate his massive intellectual processes scattered his typography all over a 10-acre lot. Sometimes, of course, if you don't happen to agree with everything that professional politicians of your neighborhood have laid out for you, you may have to make more than one cross, but at the worst it is not much more complicated than tick-tack-to which as you will recall soars to no Empyrean heights of intellectuality.

If a woman has perceptive faculties enough to know whether the street in front of her house is clean or dirty; whether the milk left at her door has its reasonable proportion of cream or not; whether the State official who inspects the

scales stands in with the corner grocer and helps short-weight her; and if she is not too palsied of mentality to make one simple X with a soft lead pencil at the designated spot on a sheet of paper, the chances are excellent that she has brains enough to vote.

Take one simple instance. Your mother has a new runabout. Let us suppose that the roadway for a mile in either direction from her residence, having been badly laid a year ago at huge expense, is now full of pitfalls. Your mother breaks every spring in her new car. Election time comes around. The patriotic gentleman who has been profitably holding the honorable position of road superintendent appeals to your mother for her suffrage. He is a gala person and is going strong up to the point where he inadvertently discloses that he is the man who built the road and has

officially set your parent back the cost of a new set of springs.

By the time your mother has checked up in the daily press just how much the road in question cost, it's a foregone conclusion that some other public character will get her suffrage.

She may vote for a low, funnel-shaped person with a frowsy mustache who is as bald as a penny wooden doll, but if she is at all like the average lady she will go to the polls with a string tied round her finger, if necessary, to remind her that the Hon. Jim Jones owes her one perfectly good set of springs, and she will vote for a party who being endowed with public money with which to build roads, can be trusted to build 'em.

It's as simple as that!

One of our greatest modern writers said that "Democracy was only an ex-

periment," and claimed that no one had a right either to praise or blame as yet, because nobody has seen it working.

Democracy after all is only a theory that with the consent of all the governed a more equitable and livable government results than if a limited number of individuals appointed by themselves, attempt to direct government according to their own ideas. And it seems only natural that men with democratic minds should produce among themselves a government that they will like better, be it bad or good, than anything anybody else can impose upon them against their will.

As I say, most men democratically minded feel like that, but what lots of them don't recognize yet is that many of the women in this country are just near enough like men in their intellectual processes to feel exactly the same way about it.

One of the first experiments in our modern democracy took place when our Puritan folks came over to Massachusetts and built their first log cabins and announced that in that village there would be freedom to worship God. It was weak and feeble and faulty. Their views on freedom in connection with the veneration of the Deity did not in the least hamper them when it came to cutting off the ears of Quakers, or ducking elderly ladies with a penchant for black cats and broom sticks. But some of it was good and all of it was well intended.

When later their descendants chucked the English breakfast tea into Boston harbor and sent George III notice that then and thereafter there was no use having a collector come 'round, the experiment in democracy moved up one peg, and that fine old line "No Taxation Without Representation" was made a

permanent and integral part of our dialect.

When in the 60's we fell out with our own people and the bickering resulted in a cruel and bloody war of years, the doctrine was established that there should be neither economic nor political slavery for any people in the United States, and democracy again moved forward.

But in all these movements woman didn't get any advertising. She simply clung meekly to the coat-tails of her mate and tried to keep up with his pace and when he sat down to rest she gratefully received such news of the new liberties he had acquired, as he was willing to impart to her.

So, while men have been experimenting gorgeously with Democracy and have won an increasingly larger Freedom, women have been for the most part compelled to tread a rather lonesome intellectual road.

When equal education was suggested for women, the country was scandalized. All the predictions which are now working overtime to show that if suffrage is given to women it will disrupt the home and do violence to the State, are said to have been worked, to prove what dire calamities would result if Mt. Holyoke Seminary for young ladies were permitted to disseminate its soul-shattering theories of cookery and Latin grammar.

The great war which has now been going on for three years is obviously a world struggle for the further extension of Democracy, and our President justified his action in declaring that a state of war existed, for us, with his now famous saying, "The world must be made safe for Democracy."

While this Titanic struggle has been raging, seven of our states have declared for the principle of equal suffrage, wholly

or in part. Canada, without any pressure whatever, has given suffrage to her women in six provinces. Russia is reported to have freed her women, and the British House of Commons has just passed, by a huge majority, a bill giving the suffrage to women of thirty and over.

So you see that whether the individual is willing to recognize it or not, the great governments of the earth are apparently becoming converted to the theory that political equality for *all* the citizens without regard to *sex* is a democratic necessity.

This question of equal suffrage is so self evidently the next step in Democracy and concerning as it does, half the race, it has grown so large, that it is almost difficult to understand how anyone who thinks can oppose it.

Of course during the Civil War there

were fat and comfortable slaves who didn't want to be free. Just as during the Revolution there were corpulent and prosperous Tories who liked "taxation without representation" better than anything else they could think of. And just so today you will run across the plump pouter-pigeon of a lady who will plaintively decry any remote suggestion of the idea that her fair, fat brain should be taxed for an opinion, or that her immediate legal lord and master from whom she draws dividends should be fretted by any intimation that she possesses the power of thought.

There's a heap of inertia to be overcome. Many women may not be used to the idea of voting as yet, and some of them undoubtedly are honestly startled at the prospect, but in states where women do vote, life goes on, I am told, along very much the customary lines.

People are born, married, have children and die.

They fall in love quite commonly, and fall out not infrequently.

The only difference perhaps is, and I am judging from the samples obtainable, that the women in equal suffrage states have just a shade more civic self respect, and as self respect is a soothing sensation, I imagine they are gratified by its possession.

At any rate, I would have you observe that in these turbulent times when people change their minds every few moments about what they want politically, there is no state in which equal suffrage obtains where there has been any serious effort to get rid of it.

Life goes on in its well ordered way, families remain reasonably cohesive, women do not appear to attract any greater degree of undue attention to

themselves than they did formerly and the state itself does not blow up with a loud report.

I want you to think of this thing as a big human problem and not simply concern yourself about the petty question as to what you personally would do with the vote if you had it. I want you to think of it hard, because as the writer already quoted observed, "Democracy is the most *splendid adventure* that the human race has ever attempted."

If your intellect doesn't emit some good honest opinion on this subject within a reasonable time, I shall be seriously perturbed over the misgiving that perhaps after all you are no niece of mine but only a witless changeling left inadvertently on my doorstep by an antique and acerbated anti-suffragist.

* * *

On glancing at the above it sounds like

unconscionably gloomy stuff to send to a cheerful young thing like yourself. I catch myself wondering whether all of my indignation is due to your introduction of the subject of suffrage, or whether a great part of it may not be plain, common, garden jealousy over the fact that someone else has attempted to assume a directing hand in your upbringing.

For as you well know, I have arrogated that complete job to myself and am resentful of interference from outside parties, society wise or otherwise.

If I have been too school-teachery, forgive me on the ground of my unalloyed affection, and forget it.

But don't forget at your convenience to let me know in words of one syllable that you are a good, hard-working little suffragist.

Affectionately yours,

UNCLE BILL

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